

569819	NOVES TENDÈNCIES EN L'APRENTATGE DE LENGÜES Advances in Second Language Acquisition [5 ECTS – OBL.]	Carme Muñoz
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### Course Description

The issue of individual differences and the degree to which they determine both the process and the product of second language acquisition has been the object of changing interest in the field of second language acquisition. Traditionally, individual differences have been classified in large groups: affective, such as personality, attitude and motivation; cognitive, such as aptitude; and social, such as gender, socio-cultural class, and learning context. Age has been considered at times as a cognitive variable but with important interactions with other dimensions. Recent perspectives attempt to study potential interactions among the different variables and the mechanisms that explain their effects. In addition, new contributions from, for example, the field of neurolinguistics are enriching their study.

Special attention will be paid in this course to the age variable, given its theoretical interest (i.e. the existence or not of biological or maturational restrictions on language learning) and the clear practical implications for the design of language teaching programmes (i.e. at what age / level should a second / third language be introduced in the curriculum?) and for the classroom (i.e. what methodologies are more appropriate for different age groups). Cognitive variables will be dealt with in the second part of the course. Special attention will be paid to language learning aptitude, given the current emphasis on research in this area (i.e. what is the role of working memory in L2 learning?), and its implications for language teaching programmes as well.

### Syllabus

1. Individual differences. General introduction
2. The Critical Period Hypothesis in first language acquisition.
3. The Maturation Hypothesis in second language acquisition
  - 2.1. Sensitive Periods
4. Talented learners
5. Other issues: multifactor explanations; ageing
6. Instructed learners
  - 5.1. The BAF project: age in foreign language acquisition
  - 5.2. The long-term effects of age and input
  - 5.3. Age and motivation
7. Language learning aptitude
  - 7.1. Measurement. Traditional tests
  - 7.2. Current research on working memory
8. Aptitude and age
9. Aptitude and first language skills
10. Aptitude and bilingualism
11. Aptitude and attrition

### Methodology

The course will combine presentations by the teacher and students in a seminar format. All students will be required to prepare the readings in advance and contribute to the debate in class.

## Assessment

Assessment will be based on a class mark, a series of tasks, and a final written assignment.

## Bibliography\*

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- Muñoz, C. 2008b. Age-related differences in foreign language learning. Revisiting the empirical evidence. *International Review of Applied Linguistics (IRAL)*, sept. 2008, 46(3): 197-220.
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- Students will be given a detailed list of references at the beginning of the course.